



U.S. Department of Agriculture Personnel Security Bulletin #08-02, Subject: Revision of the SF-86, Question #21, Mental Health

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Issue:

This Bulletin announces new changes to the Standard Form (SF) 86, Section 21, Your Medical Record, for those who served in a military combat environment and new procedures when initiating an individual to complete the SF-86 in the Electronic Questionnaires for Investigations Processing (e-QIP) system.

Date Issued:

May 08, 2008

Effective Date:

May 08, 2008

Scope and Effect:

This is an internal advisory document for use by USDA personnel involved in implementing USDA's personnel security program.

Supercession:

None

Background:

In an effort to reduce the stigma often associated with seeking professional mental health assistance and to protect individuals who have served in military combat environments, the Department of Defense (DoD) has successfully advocated a revision to Question 21 on the Standard Form (SF) 86, Questionnaire for National Security Positions.

The revised question excludes counseling related to marital, family, or grief issues, unless related to violence by the subject of investigation, and it rules out counseling for adjustments from service in military combat environments. Seeking professional care for mental health issues should not be perceived to jeopardize an individual's security clearance.

Read the entire policy at

http://www.army.mil/docs/OSD_Guidance_on_Revised_Q21.pdf.

Procedure:

Until the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) publishes the updated SF-86 later this year, all individuals who are required to complete the SF-86 will answer Question 21 using the revised language below.

USDA agencies shall provide these individuals with a copy of or a link to this bulletin at the time they are notified to complete the SF-86 in e-QIP effective immediately.

**Standard Form 86, Question 21 – Revised
(Feb 2008)**

Mental health counseling in and of itself is not a reason to revoke or deny a clearance.

In the last 7 years, have you consulted with a health care professional regarding an emotional or mental health condition or were you hospitalized for such a condition?

Answer "No" if the counseling was for any of the following reasons and was not court-ordered:

- *strictly marital, family, grief not related to violence by you; or*
- *strictly related to adjustments from service in a military combat environment.*

If you answered "Yes," indicate who conducted the treatment and/or counseling, provide the following information, and sign the Authorization for Release of Medical Information Pursuant to the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA).

Further Information: Contact John Loveless, Chief, Personnel Security Branch at (202) 720-7373.

/s/

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